

SURVEY OF PROGRESS AND TRENDS

*In the New Era  
of Motion Picture  
Entertainment*



ANNUAL REPORT  
TO THE MOTION PICTURE PRODUCERS  
AND DISTRIBUTORS OF AMERICA, INC.

March 30, 1936

*By WILL H. HAYS, President*

28 West 44th Street, New York City

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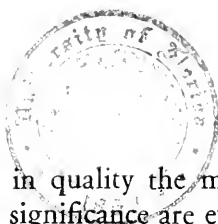
REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT  
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**F**ROM the standpoint of entertainment, social and educational merit, motion picture production reached a new peak this year. The progress recorded by the industry, and projected from the screens in more than 15,000 motion picture theatres in the United States has raised the stature of the art, brought greater dramatic themes to the screen and moved up the level of public appreciation to the point where the best in literature, in music and in drama is within the province of the universal entertainment service of motion pictures.

While the industry on its own behalf must continue to talk with pictures, not words, the record of critical and public opinion with regard to current motion pictures should greatly encourage those who see even larger prospects ahead. Conclusions reached by competent critics and by commentators of the leading organs of the press in all parts of the country are to the effect that "there is more intellectual distinction in the movies than ever before"; that "the screen has translated into celluloid drama the greatest number of established classics in the history of motion pictures"; that "the new productions have



exceeded in quality the most optimistic hopes"; that "pictures of historical significance are ever on the increase"; that "the screen has shown its ability to portray the highest concepts of the human mind"; that "pictures are finer, more interesting, more entertaining and more educational than ever before"; that "honest and compelling themes are predominating in the outstanding pictures"; that "more meaning and dignity has been lent to the screen"; and that the industry is performing "a great experiment that will help to determine whether the screen is the universal entertainment medium for the expression of the highest forms of art and drama."

Such tributes to the progress of the art are perhaps all the more striking because of the fact that the period under review marked only the ninth anniversary of the first talking motion picture. Sound was a revolutionary development which gave birth practically to a new art-form, made necessary the development of new techniques of production, the finding and training of many new artists, the creation or discovery of new source material, the need of great new investments for technical facilities, and the creation of self-regulatory measures to cope with the new problems which the addition of speech to motion brought to the social aspects of motion picture entertainment.

Equally notable is the number, range and variety of outstanding pictures which led the industry's best efforts during 1935. The advance was on a wide front—so wide in fact that the following is but a partial list of such films, each chosen by various groups of critical opinion throughout the country as among the ten best films of the year produced by the American motion picture industry:

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which in most impressive manner advanced the dramatic range of the cinema to Shakespeare;

*Mutiny on the Bounty*, a superb picturization of a saga of the sea, which called forth the highest artistic and technical resources of the screen;



*A Tale of Two Cities*, which, together with the memorable production of *David Copperfield*, established the cycle of *Dickens* on the screen;

*The Story of Louis Pasteur*, a picture which not only accelerated the progress of the screen but performed an important service to education by its effective dramatization of the life of a great scientist and his struggles for humanity;

*The Informer*, greeted as a classic tragedy of the screen and as establishing the fact beyond doubt that the cinema has become a dramatic medium of the first importance;

*Black Fury*, in which vivid entertainment was built around a current social theme;

*Ruggles of Red Gap*, a notable comedy of American life and manners in the pioneer spirit of the American West;

*Les Miserables*, Victor Hugo's unforgettable story presented with distinguished artistry;

*The Farmer Takes a Wife*, in which the screen portrayed an interesting period of American history, when the Erie Canal was the connecting link between New York and the Great Lakes;

*Top Hat* and *Follow the Fleet*, Irving Berlin musicals which set the country playing and whistling new airs; conspicuous for their fine and popular dancing and comedy;

*Rose Marie*, which with *Naughty Marietta* added to the series of well-known musical romances brought to American motion picture audiences, sung by leading artists and reproduced with technical perfection;

*Ah, Wilderness!* Eugene O'Neill's comedy of youth and of American life in New England in the nineties;

*Magnificent Obsession*, a social drama that carried a high spiritual message and which emphasized through strong dramatic presentation the higher functions of the screen;

*The Prisoner of Shark Island*, a remarkable drama of our own land which further advanced the number of films dealing with interesting, significant or important incidents of American history;

*Crime and Punishment*, a vivid psychological study based on Dostoevsky's famous novel;

*Broadway Melody of 1936*, a modern musical comedy of scintillating song, ballet and dance numbers, combined to serve the purpose of family entertainment;

*Captain Blood*, a picture of exciting adventure and romance based on a tale of seventeenth century England;

*Diamond Jim*, a film not only of popular entertainment merit, but reminiscent of a phase of our country's development;

*"G"-Men*, which portrayed the training and life of officers of justice who "get their men," introducing a treatment which placed healthy and helpful emphasis on law enforcement;

Only the limitations of space prevent the further extension of this list which includes, among other pictures:

*Alice Adams*

*The Crusades*

*Anna Karenina*

*The Country Doctor*

*Becky Sharp*

*Curly Top*

*Call of the Wild*

*The Dark Angel*

*Cardinal Richelieu*

*The Gay Deception*



<i>I Dream Too Much</i>	<i>Return of Peter Grimm</i>
<i>Life Begins at Forty</i>	<i>Rose of the Rancho</i>
<i>The Littlest Rebel</i>	<i>So Red the Rose</i>
<i>Lives of a Bengal Lancer</i>	<i>Steamboat Round the Bend</i>
<i>Love Me Forever</i>	<i>Sylvia Scarlett</i>
<i>The Man Who Reclaimed His Head</i>	<i>Thanks a Million</i>
<i>Mary Burns, Fugitive</i>	<i>These Three</i>
<i>Metropolitan</i>	<i>The Trail of the Lonesome Pine</i>
<i>Modern Times</i>	<i>Yellow Dust</i>
<i>Peter Ibbetson</i>	
and many others.	

### *In the Field of Fantasy*

Worthy of review this year, also, under a distinct and separate category, is the artistic progress being made by the screen in fields of pure fantasy. The promise of new and original enlivenment born with the first animated cartoon is developing to the dignity of true art. The world has taken to its bosom those products of our studios that come out of the realm of sheer imagery. The little comedies and dramas played by the fantastic figures of the screen speak the language of all men and of all ages. They tell a tale and point a moral. We are seeing the rise of a new medium of story telling. It is a satisfaction to note that a feature-length work of this character is now in production. With improved technique and with the advantages of color, sound and music, it is not difficult to foresee dramas spun from fantasy, which, with kindly humor or satire, may come to have large social and even educational significance, and which may draw audiences undreamed of by Aristophanes when he fashioned his comedies from the adventures of insects and birds.

## *Trend Continues Toward Higher Artistic Standards*

Forthcoming productions indicate that the artistic and dramatic trend continues upward.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, being produced with all the grandeur and vividness that only the screen permits, will further emphasize the dramatic reach of this art. As late as January, 1934, I was unable to go beyond the reference to the possibility that the screen and the supporting public would "soon be ready for the treasure house of the great comedy and drama that lies in a possible Shakespearean cycle on the screen."

Yet in 1935 we witnessed the actual production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and now Shakespeare's deathless play of tragic love is about to be introduced to the universal motion picture audience.

*Mary of Scotland* will transfer a great historical tragedy to the screen.

*Under Two Flags* will be the film version of Ouida's gripping romance and adventure story, told against the background which no stage or novel could reproduce.

*Green Pastures* will bring to the screen this religious folk play with its simple but profound spiritual message.

*The Life of Beethoven* will be the colorful story of the composer interwoven with the presentation of his great musical compositions.

Films like *Alaska Bound*, *Prairie Schooners*, *Nevada*, *Ramona*, *Last of the Mohicans*, *Sutter's Gold*, *Buffalo Bill* and others—pictures with emphasis on our national past, photographed against great natural backgrounds—will continue the movement dramatically to reproduce American historical events.

The movement towards greater artistry is affecting all types of picture production. It is interesting to note that the Westerns, formerly

the time-honored transcriptions of the popular dime novels, are being lifted to higher artistic content by stories that will translate to the screen the real romance inherent in the conquest of mountains, plains and deserts that marked the efforts of America's hardy and valiant pioneers.

Again, space does not permit a complete review of the range and variety of other forthcoming pictures which will include such productions as:

<i>Anthony Adverse</i>	<i>Lost Horizon</i>
<i>Captain January</i>	<i>Mr. Deeds Comes to Town</i>
<i>Captains Courageous</i>	<i>The Old Maid</i>
<i>Charge of the Light Brigade</i>	<i>Poppy</i>
<i>Garibaldi</i>	<i>Rhythm of the Range</i>
<i>Good-bye Mr. Chips</i>	<i>Road to Glory</i>
<i>Good Earth</i>	<i>San Francisco</i>
<i>The Great Ziegfeld</i>	<i>Show Boat</i>
<i>Little Lord Fauntleroy</i>	<i>Silas Marner</i>

The record of the industry's progress, evidenced by the remarkable rise in artistic standards, is not stated to under-estimate the problems still ahead. It is stated to confirm the fact that there is a growing public that accepts and welcomes the finer forms of entertainment; that informative and co-operative processes set up by the organized motion picture industry are creating the conditions for the commercially successful production and distribution of such entertainment; that within the framework of self-regulation truly great screen features can be produced and paying audiences found for them; and that the American public can be trusted to vote down the tawdry, vulgar or banal.

Not every picture produced by the industry during the period under review is entirely free from objection in the latter respects. There are and always will be, borderline cases, where even critical opinion will divide as to the over-all social or moral values of a given film or dramatic performance, and where the strictest moral rating

will make a necessary and proper distinction as between adult and family attendance. In such instances public opinion is finally the safe guide. Producers cannot fail to note that in the choice of theme, treatment, or entertainment personality, the higher standards of public appreciation as expressed at the box-office support the wholesome, the soundly dramatic, the truly entertaining and the artistic. This fact is becoming incontestably clear.

The vigilance which will not permit our Production Code to degenerate into a mere process of censorship applies to the opportunities as well as to the self-restraint of the screen. The character of pictures produced during the current season demonstrates the ability of the screen to deal with vital subjects of the day, with strong dramatic scenes, with social problems and with all dramatic forms on which honest entertainment can be built. This is asserted, notwithstanding such artificial controversies as may be raised to the contrary.

The question of public order, of public good, of avoiding the inflammatory, the prejudicial or the subversive, is a problem of social responsibility everlastingly imposed upon those who would produce, distribute and exhibit pictures to an universal audience of 80,000,000 men, women and children in the United States alone. The distinction between motion pictures with a message and self-serving propaganda which misrepresents the purpose of the entertainment screen is one determinable through the processes of common sense. Between the screen's basic function of entertainment and recreation for the millions which it must serve, and the art's higher purpose as an aesthetic, educational and dramatic medium of first importance, there is room, much of which is still unused, for the presentation and treatment of the greatest theses of life, literature, music and drama.

### *Development of Educational Processes*

With the constant educational task before us of finding the right audiences for the right pictures, in order that the progress of the screen

may be harnessed to the higher rather than to the lower entertainment demands of an universal audience, the methods and machinery created by your Association take on new significance. It is not to be forgotten that barely fifteen years ago the motion picture was the scorned step-sister of the arts. It was rather generally regarded with disdain by the arbiters of taste and culture, and considered a larger nickelodeon offering diversion consisting chiefly of Westerns and slapstick comedy.

During these years the screen nevertheless continued to be the favorite entertainment of the masses. The improvement of such a popular art, in moral and artistic value, in educational content, and in obedience to the laws of good taste was a task that required, and fortunately secured, the co-operation of religious, social and educational leadership. The progress now to be noted is the direct result of such organized co-operative effort. The keystones of our program to make possible the progressive rise of the artistic and social level of motion picture production may be summarized as follows:

*(a) Self-discipline at the Point of Production.*

This responsibility is expressed through the processes of our Motion Picture Production Code. The major purpose of the Association, in this respect, is stated in its By-Laws as "establishing and maintaining the highest possible moral and artistic standards in motion picture production, by developing the educational as well as the entertainment value and the general usefulness of the motion picture." The successful development of these processes not only has gained the support of public opinion for the industry, but has helped greatly to raise the artistic standards of motion picture production. This is made amply evident by the record of the industry during 1935.

*(b) Processes to Develop Appreciation  
of Quality Motion Pictures.*

The open door maintained by the industry to enable educational, social, religious and other groups to classify motion pictures and pro-

more theatre attendance on the basis of proper social and educational standards is a development that continues to grow in significance. It is notable that reviews of motion pictures issued by American public groups are circulating in twenty or more foreign countries, including India, Australia, China and South Africa. In addition, it may be recorded, that during 1935 public information material furnished directly by the Association was multiplied enormously through the activities of socially-minded civic, educational and religious leaders.

During the period under review more than 10,000 public addresses were made by local motion picture chairmen and motion picture council leaders based on current news and other information regarding the character of film productions; more than one hundred radio stations carried an estimated total of 4,000 radio broadcasts by these leaders recommending current pictures upon the basis of their artistic and social values; approximately five hundred newspapers with a combined circulation of more than 20,000,000 carried lists of recommended pictures issued by various central previewing committees; scores of chain telephone committees organized by local councils carried the news of pictures of outstanding social value to the key people in many communities.

In every possible respect our educational activities have been related to the problem of raising the level of motion picture appreciation and harnessing greater public support to the pictures of the better kind. Even casual consideration of the phenomenon of 1935—class pictures of the highest artistic merit not only accepted but encouraged by the attendance of mass audiences—will indicate that this remarkable development did not “just happen.” It came about through the establishment of machinery and the development of procedures over the course of years, through persistently and consistently organized effort, through the vast contributions made by social, educational and religious forces, and through the high standards of public responsibility developed in the organized motion picture industry by means of self-regulation. Our first duty is to make certain the high quality

of our own product; our obligation no less is to co-operate in sympathy and understanding with these responsible groups.

### *Newsreels*

The function of the screen as a medium of news and information was markedly advanced during the past twelve months by the character and range of the newsreels. A year of extraordinarily significant events in our own country and in the world at large has been mirrored authentically and impartially to the millions of the motion picture audience.

The story of the nation's rise from the depths of depression, the progress of the Italo-Ethiopian war, the crisis in the League of Nations, the resurgence of Germany, the tragic implication of a world arming for the next conflict, the death of King George and the accession of King Edward in England, are among the notable historical documents which the newsreels during the year have made for posterity.

### *Short Subjects*

The short subject, keeping pace with the general upward trend in motion picture quality, has shown a marked rise in artistic and entertainment standards. Music and the use of color were the features of many of these subjects produced during the year. Travel, humor, sports and educational themes predominated.

### *Education*

Both in the educational by-products of the screen's vast entertainment service and in the direct contribution made by the industry to the development of the motion picture as an arm of technical and general education, progress is to be noted for the year.

Photoplay appreciation classes inaugurated by public schools and similar institutions; the use as supplementary teaching material of the

greater literary, historical and dramatic films produced by the industry; character-building studies taken from outstanding productions which featured themes of high spiritual and social value, were included in such activities.

The fact that the subjects used in the character-building projects were not specially filmed for the purpose, but were actual excerpts from existing photoplays, demonstrates the rise in social importance of the modern motion picture screen. All educators acquainted with the enterprise are agreed that the industry has made available to them an important body of character-education material.

The movement is likewise progressing for the development of those techniques required to make the motion picture film a teaching medium to supplement the printed textbook and the lecture. It is a purpose of the highest educational and cultural importance. Having co-operated with projects that already have resulted in the production of surgical, scientific and religious films of this character, this Association has consistently encouraged such movements, in accordance with the pledged purpose of the industry to develop "the educational as well as the entertainment values and general usefulness of the motion picture."

### *Film Archives*

The completion of the National Archives Building in Washington is finally bringing the opportunity to the industry to perpetuate its contributions to the historical records of our time by the film documents it has created. This has long been our hope as well as our insistence. Through the progress of the art, the history of contemporary events may now be preserved for future generations with the vividness, realism and certitude of life. This is the only means of recording the pageant of history in the living tempo of the times in which the events occur. The American motion picture industry has produced and has in its vaults countless miles of newsreels and historical subjects reporting the outstanding events and picturing the great figures



in the international arena during this, the most stirring period, perhaps, of world history. Moreover, the entertainment screen is constantly adding highly artistic and authoritative reproductions of the American scene as described in the written records of history.

It would be a disservice to posterity if we failed to organize this moving, living, talking record so that historical and educational material may be made available to educators, film creators and students of the future. The purpose of a film library in the National Archives Building in Washington, as an important step in the right direction, is therefore to be commended.

### *Progress of Self-Regulation in Motion Picture Production*

The processes of self-regulation with regard to our Production Code were further extended during the past twelve months. A number of foreign producers desiring American distribution and wishing to keep their pictures within the production standards set up by the American industry are being given the advantage of our facilities in this respect. Similar co-operation on a complete and effective basis has been extended to producers of American pictures not now affiliated with the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc. Your Association has kept the doors open to all who are desirous of maintaining the standards established and perfected by the organized industry during the course of many years, to effect progressive improvement in the production of all motion picture entertainment wherever or by whomsoever made.

Equally significant, and economically important, was the largely increased activity imposed upon the Association by the growing practice of consultation, conference, suggestion and advice with regard to prospective screen material in order that objectionable features, if any, may be made apparent in advance of production. Much wasted effort and great expense are thus avoided, by eliminating the necessity of

corrections later when Code violations might be discovered in the finished film.

The following figures summarize the continuous activity during the year of our Production Code administration both in Hollywood and in New York:

### 1935

Books, synopses, plays and stories analyzed . . . .	263
Number of scripts studied . . . . .	1103
Number of pictures reviewed . . . . .	1507*
Number of consultations . . . . .	1833
Number of written opinions expressing the Association's reasoned judgment relative to stories, scripts, pictures, etc. . . . .	5358

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(\*Includes completed pictures which, because of changes, deletions, or retakes suggested, have been reviewed more than once. Also includes 71 feature pictures produced and released prior to July 15, 1934, and submitted for approval before re-issue.)

There has been a gratifying increase in the number of original source materials considered—books, synopses, plays and stories; and most significant has been the increase from 2602 in 1934 to 5358 in 1935 in the number of written opinions submitted to the studios.

Important also is the increase in the number of scripts offered and studied in 1935 over previous years. In 1935 there were 1103 as compared with 822 in 1934, with 613 in 1933 and with 441 in 1932. The increase indicated this year is 34 percent over 1934; 80 percent over 1933 and 150 percent over 1932.

The following table is interesting as indicating the source material for the 519 feature-length pictures produced in 1935 and approved under our Production Code during the same calendar year:

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>
From original screen stories . . . . .	244	47.01
From stage plays . . . . .	41	7.90
From novels . . . . .	142	27.36
From biographies . . . . .	3	.58
From short stories . . . . .	37	7.13
Miscellaneous . . . . .	52	10.02
	<hr/> 519	<hr/> 100.00

### *Higher Standards of Entertainment Promotion*

The co-operative effort of the industry to raise the quality of its advertising to the higher standards of motion picture production took on increased range and scope during 1935.

The large-scale project which reached its full form with the completion in 1933 of our Advertising Advisory Council has been generally accepted as a striking contribution to the better advertising movement generally.

The extent of this effort and the co-operation it has received are made evident by the following table of operations during 1935:

<i>Material submitted:</i>	<i>Discarded or revised to meet standards prescribed by Advertising Code:</i>
100,810 stills (West Coast) . . . . .	808
2,500 stills (East Coast) . . . . .	119
401 press books . . . . .	15
12,450 advertisements . . . . .	351
12,100 exploitation ideas . . . . .	17
11,100 miscellaneous accessories . . . . .	53
2,044 posters . . . . .	62
867 trailers . . . . .	3

These figures cover only source material. For good or bad, motion picture advertising is multiplied thousands of times each day by individual exhibitors. The Council has had encouraging success in persuading occasional offenders in the field to bring their local advertising adaptations and "stunts" wholly into line with the national policy of cleanliness in the screen's show window.

The vast strides made by the industry and the emergence of the motion picture into higher entertainment levels have greatly extended the field and function of the industry's advertising and publicity. The critical world echoes with the praise of fine pictures. We have produced screen features which demand the interest and respect of the most cultivated elements of our population. But from the standpoint of the public as a whole, the wrong kind of advertising can put the wrong kind of face value on the pictures offered.

The easy assumption that the merely suggestive, alluring or captivating in illustration or copy was enough to "sell" a picture, regardless of its content, could not be quickly exploded in the days when the public simply went "to the pictures," not to selected or considered motion picture entertainment. The fetish that the bigger the adjective the better the impression created upon the public mind was more the result of competition than of comprehension. It is a satisfaction to see such concepts passing.

The signs of a new day are noted earnestly by the promotional and advertising men of our industry. We are dealing with many pictures, in which the thrilling feats of science, the great moments of history, the finest examples of literature, the mystifying problems of life, and the inspiring music of the masters are the motifs of the new productions.

We are dealing with an audience which today includes an infinite variety of class groups drawn to the motion picture theatre by the better entertainment that is becoming predominant upon the screen. We propose to hold the respect as well as the attendance support of

these new segments. They include the community leadership which brings to the industry its deserved measure of support from school, home, church and many other institutions now co-operating in the better-picture movement throughout the United States. We need statesmanship as well as salesmanship in our better advertising efforts.

Some producers have erred, and erred greatly, in their conclusions that pictures can be "too good" from an artistic standpoint, because in some instances pictures critically hailed as artistic triumphs have died miserably at the box-office. The probabilities are greater that the exploitation was "too bad" than that the pictures were "too good."

It is significant that more than one such product of our studios, hailed this year in superlative terms for dramatic intensity and artistry, and given at first a disappointing box-office reception, found its public through guidance by critical opinion and has been built up to solid commercial success. And the fact is that every previous artistic "failure" in the industry paved the way, through its advertising influence, for the greater artistic and commercial successes that followed.

The rise is to be noted, therefore, of a new day of advertising effort in which the right product will be "sold" to the right audience in the right way. Some of the distinctive methods recently adopted to introduce the truly great picture sufficiently in advance of exhibition, the greater artistry that has marked the exploitation of our greater products, and the recognition that wholesomeness and good taste are creative stimuli, are welcome signs of such an era.

### *Title Registration*

During the year much thought has been given to improving further and amplifying the method of title registration and to the co-ordination of the activity with the Production Code administration. A new set of Governing Memoranda has been adopted which it is believed will aid in sustaining the high standard of titles which has

been developed. There were registered during the year a total of 3,312 titles.

### *Trade Practices*

In an industry that does not really manufacture a product but creates *entertainment* in a form that can be reproduced on the motion picture screen, which does not permanently distribute but which really routes dramatic, musical and other spectacles in relation to time, place and areas covered, which does not sell but rents its product to the theatre for a given "run," which in fact has sheer art as an essential constituent element—in such an enterprise it is obvious that trade practices must be generic to the unique conditions imposed by the art and the industry. In such complex relationships endless opportunities exist for friction, irritation and litigation.

The bases of the trade practice structure for the industry promoted since the formation of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America have been conciliation and arbitration.

Conciliation has avoided acrimonious disputes and ruinous delays in countless instances.

Arbitration procedures built up over a period of years vastly reduced litigation in the industry and effected large saving for all concerned.

It is important to note that the Federal Court commended the fairness and social value of the arbitration procedures which brought about these results, although constrained to find some of the industry procedures to be in conflict in certain respects with existing interpretations of law.

Many of the important principles implied under a completely integrated scheme of industry self-regulation were included in the all-embracing code adopted by the industry under the NRA Act. And a very sincere attempt was made to develop the greatest good for all factors during the period of the operation of that law.

During the past year an exhaustive survey and study has been made, with progress toward a plan built upon purely co-operative processes in which mediation and conciliation will play the larger part. No industry has stronger pillars of self-regulation to build upon, and success is indicated if the co-operative spirit is pursued.

### *Technical Advancement*

Technical progress in the industry continued apace during the year. Even higher definition of image and sound was achieved as the result of technical developments. Considerable progress was noted in extending the range and frequency of sound recording and reproduction, and many theatres are being re-equipped for the production of the higher quality sound now being recorded on the film. Further research is being continued on such problems as the relation between photography and the processing of film, the illumination of the screen, printing densities, and other processes and methods.

The use of color received considerable emphasis during the year. Plans to date call for the production of ten or more all-color features in 1936.

Much has been accomplished also in the development of micro-photographic duplication methods. Important use is foreseen of this process by governmental institutions and other organizations in connection with their records. For instance, by means of micro-photography a year's issue of a metropolitan newspaper may be reproduced in toto upon a strip of film less than 1,000 feet long—legible with suitable magnification.

### *Conservation Activities*

The fire prevention service maintained for the industry has given us foremost place in the field of safety and conservation. This fact has

been referred to by fire prevention engineers on many occasions during the past twelve months.

In 1935 two inconsequential fires occurred in film exchanges in the United States. No film was involved in either case, the fires being due to other causes. The total monetary loss was \$8.00. This is rather significant when we remember that over 27,000 miles of film are handled each day in the exchanges in this country alone.

### *Foreign*

American pictures continue to receive generous support on the screens of the world, notwithstanding the marked rise of picture production in other lands. Our outstanding productions still command the interest and tribute of world-wide audiences for their artistic and entertainment merit.

Nevertheless, the wave of intense nationalism sweeping many European countries continues to raise increasingly difficult obstacles to the distribution of American films abroad. Foreign governments have exempted their film industries from duties on imported machinery, and from taxes and internal duties on domestically-produced pictures. In many cases such productions are developed under actual government subsidies.

In contrast to restrictive policies elsewhere is the open door maintained by our own theatres for films from abroad and also the rivalry welcomed and encouraged by the American motion picture industry for the production, distribution and exhibition of the finest in film entertainment. During the year 1935, there was a total of 241 foreign-produced films shown in the United States. In 1934 the total was 174.

There were approximately 1200 feature pictures made throughout the world during the last year. Of these some 640 originated in European or English studios, England being the largest contributor with



163, France 135, Germany 129, Spain 50, Czechoslovakia 30, Italy 30, Hungary 15, with other countries supplying the remainder. Egypt, India, China, Japan, Australia, the Argentine and Mexico are now among the producing nations.

To date more than thirteen countries have placed some form of quota or contingent laws in effect, aimed directly at the distribution of foreign-made pictures. In the face of the problems developing in foreign distribution, our Film Boards and similar organizations abroad are functioning in a constructive and co-operative spirit.

### *Theatres*

During 1935 there were 826 additional theatres placed in regular operation throughout the country, adding 379,383 seats to the nation's motion picture theatres. There now remain 1519 theatres unequipped to reproduce sound pictures, almost all of which are closed indefinitely and most of which are obsolete buildings in obscure locations.

At the end of 1935 there were 15,378 theatres operating in the United States. There were more than 400 theatre circuits of four houses or more, and these operated 5,656 theatres. The five major circuits operated 1,094 theatres.

### *Central Casting Corporation*

The Central Casting Corporation, co-operatively organized to facilitate employment of "extras" by the industry, was ten years old on January 1st, 1936. The California State Labor Department recently completed a survey of this work. Dr. Louis Bloch, principal statistician for the Department, said in his report:

"After careful examining of available data, I feel confident that the Central Casting Corporation has proved of immense benefit to the extras and that it has accomplished the objec-

tives for which it has been established, with the exception of that of decasualization.”

Dr. Bloch’s proposal that the registered list of extras should be cut down to a number who might earn modest support through such work has been favorably recommended to the industry. In the calendar year just past the number of placements of extras rose from 219,857 in 1934 to 278,486 in 1935, an increase of 26%. This does not mean a proportionate increase of opportunity in view of the casualness of such employment.

During the ten years of operation of the Central Casting Corporation there have been 2,531,563 placements. Wages paid amounted to \$22,591,446. Considering the conditions that existed ten years ago, when thousands of extra players were forced to make the rounds of studios often located miles apart, and often compelled to pay as much as 7% of their salaries to commercial employment agencies, this free and centralized bureau for the placement of extra players, established after the survey which the Russell Sage Foundation generously made at our request, has justified itself socially as well as economically.

### *Employment of Minors in Motion Picture Industry*

At a time when child labor is still a social problem, the motion picture industry may congratulate itself upon conditions in this respect obtaining in our studios.

“The finest conditions and regulations in the world governing the employment of minors in industry are those to be found in the motion picture industry.”

The above-quoted statement has been subscribed to by Vierling Kersey, Director of the California State Department of Education, and

Guy M. Hoyt, Director of Attendance and Employment of Minors Section of the Board of Education of the city of Los Angeles. They are directly engaged with this problem in the State of California.

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All in all, it would seem that the record established by the industry during the past twelve months justifies confidence in still greater progress ahead.

The new standards of artistry attained by the screen this year are a tribute to the creative personnel of the industry. The constantly higher level of intelligence to which motion pictures are advancing means much to the future of the art and the welfare of society. Such developments extend the artistic and dramatic range of the screen and bring new elements of attendance to the motion picture theatre.

It is a tribute just as full to the great and growing success which the co-operation given to the industry by educational, social and religious leadership has effected in the standards of motion picture appreciation. The processes of criticism, selection and education have enlarged, not restricted, the artistic and dramatic opportunities of the screen; they have increased, not decreased, motion picture attendance.

In these results lies the true significance of our steady progress on the planned path of self-regulation. It is a path on which the twin necessities of a constantly improving quality of supply and a constantly rising standard of demand are moving forward together. It means an industry built upon a wider basis of public service and an art that can rise to the highest social ends.

March 30, 1936.

WILL H. HAYS.

## SUPPLEMENTAL

### *Public Opinion 1935-36 on the New Heights Reached by the Art*

"Our hearts have lifted as we have witnessed the superb artistry, the high drama, the intense love interest, the sheer beauty, the gripping action of several masterpieces . . . the pictures are not dull; they are brilliant. No, they are not namby-pamby; they have punch and plenty of it."—*Boston (Mass.) Traveler*.

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"People of all ages can take new interest in the movie theatre as a place where one may find entertainment which is intelligent and artistic, which offers sentiment and genuine romance and in not a few cases is even inspiring. And in spite of the early wails and sneers of people who ought to have known better we have not yet seen any indication of a serious lapse into ineptness, prudishness or the maudlin mood."—*Detroit Free Press*.

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"There was a time when motion pictures by and large could be indicted as juvenile and calculated to appeal only to the mentally immature, but that time definitely has passed."—*Baltimore Evening Sun*.

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"Motion pictures in the past year made more progress along the lines of artistic achievement and general entertainment values than in almost any similar period in their history . . ."—*Jersey City (N. J.) Journal*.

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"No future chronicler of the nineteen thirties can fail to note the gains made by the motion picture industry during the last few years. The films have become artistic as well as articulate and are developing a rich heritage of fiction, biography and drama."—*Dayton (Ohio) Herald*.

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"The producers have given us not only cleaner films, but productions boasting of finer technique, better drama and excellent entertainment . . ."—*Rochester (N. Y.) Catholic Courier*.

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"And now in 1935 the movies celebrate the feature-film's coming-of-age with the first full transcription to the sound screen of a Shakespearean play. Note that this is a real coming-of-age, in achievement as in years. Just as no actor has won his spurs until he has done justice to a Shakespearean role so no theatre form can claim full distinction until it has done justice to a Shakespearean play."—*New Haven (Conn.) Journal-Courier-Times*.

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"The year has proved two things, first, that the motion picture industry can produce art in pictures, and, second, that the public will patronize these pictures when they are presented. The past year has witnessed some notable productions, pictures in which the absence of the sex motive was predominate."—*Salt Lake City Tribune*.

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"In recent years there has been a tremendous advance in the quality of motion and sound pictures . . . the number of exceptionally well produced and acted pictures has increased so greatly in the past two years that no one, going once a week to the cinema, could see them all . . ."—*Rochester (N. Y.) Times Union*.

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"The new trend has spread in the musicals which no longer depend so much on elaborateness, artificial choreography, nudity, sensational water scenes, and all that sort of thing, as upon good taste, wit, grace, humor, and the human element."—*Boston American*.

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"The artistic development of the movies has been extremely satisfactory during the past year . . . The striking demonstration of a public demand for the elimination of vulgarity spurred the cinema to seek to retrieve public confidence by proving its skill in making wholesome films that still dealt realistically with life."—*Omaha (Neb.) World-Herald*.

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## On the New Era of Screen Entertainment

"The cinema is now beginning to capture more of life itself, and to contain more of a message for the mental and spiritual man. It has moved into the deeper and saner American concept of life.

"The motion picture is one of man's most adaptable agencies of expression, and its possibilities as such are practically unlimited. It can plumb very deep depths in the human makeup."—*Columbus (Ga.) Ledger-Enquirer*.

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"Mr. Hays emphasizes the theory that 'quality can be produced in quantity and that generous support can be enlisted for it.' On such a program the motion picture producers of America can depend upon the united support of the press, the pulpit and the leaders of thought in the country and can build towards a greater and more prosperous industry."—*Atlanta Constitution*.

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"The American motion picture industry undoubtedly has made serious mistakes, but throughout its history it has shown a marked capacity for adjustment. That has saved it from continuing any mistake indefinitely. The present trend towards entertainment plus intelligence promises to benefit not only the industry but its public."—*Kansas City, Mo., Star*.

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"The movies have become the universal amusement for the serious-minded as well as those who enjoy pleasures in a lighter vein, they offer an outlet for the emotions and, in their finish and beauty of production, appeal to the artistic sense."—*Baton Rouge (La.) State Times*.

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"On every side one hears little but praise of what the industry has done to meet the requirements of decent public sentiment. . . . The efforts of the motion picture industry to give the public clean and stimulating entertainment are deserving of the highest commendation. . . ."—*Hartford (Conn.) Courant*.

"No one will deny that motion pictures have taken a decided upward swing. Splendid pictures; settings which are breath-taking in their exquisite beauty or rugged grandeur; stories that move steadily forward and upward to a worthy climax; historical events in graphic portrayal; humor wholesome and clean;—yes, there are movies these days which the morally and religiously sensitive person, the intellectual and fastidious person can wholeheartedly enjoy."—*St. Louis (Mo.) Evangelical Herald*.

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"A new American movie has been born and it has been a good thing not only for the movies but for the public at large. Movie producers have taken thought to the kind of pictures they produce. They have brought to the screen some of the immortal stories of all time and have given a new meaning and a new significance by the manner in which it was possible to treat them."—*Grinnell (Iowa) Register*.

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"Steady patrons of the motion picture theaters . . . must be rejoicing in the recent trend of the producers to bring to life once more the great novels of the 19th and early 20th centuries. . . . Congratulations are in order for the improvement in the motion picture which has been brought about in the last few months."—*Binghamton (N. Y.) Sun*.

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"The record of the year is something to be proud of, and as other newspapers suggest, the public, demanding and patronizing the splendid, wholesome, interesting entertainment offered, has shown an advance in culture."—*Jacksonville (Fla.) Times-Union*.

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"It is with a sense of keen personal and social delight that we have watched the gradual evolution of the motion picture theatre from its not-so-long abandoned plane of sensationalized sex-madness to a definite level of cultural achievement. We hail the new era in motion pictures."—*Gastonia (N. C.) Gazette*.

## *On the Success of Self-regulation in the Motion Picture Industry*

"We are apt to forget just how great a miracle it is that we should be able to find romance, comedy, history, or tears of sympathy right around the corner from our homes, presented with a dramatic excellence that seems to improve each year. The making of a photoplay is an intense, exciting, high speed operation conducted by creative people. If we hamper these people by trying to administer iron-clad rules under which they must work, we will accomplish nothing except to kill the entertainment value, the artistic value and the great educational power of the motion picture."—*Mrs. Leo B. Hedges, Motion Picture Chairman, California Congress of Parents and Teachers, in Los Angeles Examiner.*

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"A more wholesome atmosphere has begun to pervade the screen theatre. The silly and often tawdry pictures of the past are being superseded by more serious and better-acted plays of the present. Whether current programs indicate a lasting change of heart on the part of the producer remains to be seen. That the moving picture industry by an enlightened change of policy is attracting a public hitherto immune to its charms there can be no doubt. It is a good sign. It may even signalize the beginning of a new era."—*Toronto Mail & Empire.*

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"What is 'indecent'? Now that a great many people have been looking at the cinema through a microscope, they have discovered something which they had not before realized. They find that it is often a very difficult task to make a moral estimate of a picture; and they are vaguely pained when gleeful critics compare the resultant differences of opinion and make caustic references to geographic morality, etc.

"But should this state of affairs be so astonishing? If bespectacled theologians dispute about the morality of human acts calmly dissected and displayed in the theological laboratory, why should not judges of the movies, clerical or lay, be expected to differ at times in their opinions about human acts warmly pictured in the flesh?"—*America.*

"A glance at the titles of the more talked-of motion pictures which have appeared in the last year or two or which are booked for the near future, is highly revealing.

"Assuredly the business as well as the art of motion pictures has opened a new chapter and a new deal, though not as suddenly as casual observers may assume. Years ago Will H. Hays said to his board of directors of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America: 'Every picture produced upon a higher standard of entertainment value is lifting by that much the standard of public appreciation for pictures of the better kind, which, in turn, must lift the standard of achievement by the motion picture industry.'"—*Atlanta Journal.*

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"The casual, as well as the persistent moviegoer, is aware of steady advance in screen plays . . . The total score is good and justified the claim the movies now make to adult patronage. The progress made, and plans for tomorrow, are wholly encouraging."—*Omaha World-Herald.*

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"Recent expressions from those groups which united in a drive to improve the quality of motion picture entertainment suggest that Hollywood has responded with a real effort . . . The moving picture industry should be rewarded for this willingness to conform to higher standards."—*Providence News-Tribune.*

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"You have portrayed in the recent series of pictures dealing with the so-called G-Men a type of law enforcement officer of whom any true American may be justly proud and you have brought through the medium of your industry to practically every home in America a realization that crime truly does not pay.

"I want to take this opportunity to express to you publicly not only my official, but my personal appreciation of the obligation under which I feel to you for having created a great public sentiment of law enforcement consciousness, counteracting in great measure that wave of consciousness that had permeated the American public for many years."—*Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U. S. Department of Justice.*

## On the Social Progress of the Screen

"The average motion picture fan might have difficulty in recalling a single film in the last two or three months to which he could find objection on the ground that it was offensive to morals. Opportunities for pictures of great dramatic possibilities have not been exhausted. Literature is still able to offer tales of earlier generations that can be filmed to advantage."—*Sioux City Journal*.

"There can be no question but the moral tone of the moving pictures has grown remarkably. We have noticed that approved pictures in our city have brought very considerable more revenue to the box-office than did the questionable pictures."—*Omaha (Neb.) True Voice*.

"There is no more heartening feature of modern entertainment than the marked improvement in the grade of the best moving pictures now available to the public. The industry has discovered that decent pictures will pay. The public has found out that decent pictures can be altogether delightful."—*Dallas Journal*.

"According to Mrs. James F. Looram, motion picture chairman of the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae, 'Since last July our organization has been able to endorse 96 per cent of the product of major film studios.' Educating the quality of public demand, while the producers worked with us to improve entertainment to meet this demand, has solved the problem. Our organization realizes that the function of pictures is for entertainment only."—*New York American*.

"Now, despite the absurdity of the New Psychology, it is being made the basis for a vast amount of pseudo-scientific literature. The book to which I have referred, dealing with supposed effects of movies on our children, is a prime example. It combines pseudo-psychological study with what is known as case study.

"What happens is that the New Psychologists try to find out what is wrong with a boy, and study him. They talk to him and write down what he says, and then they study his past career. They find out whether he is in the habit of killing cats, pulling their tails out, or shooting birds, and so on, whatever

a child does. It would not look very good for anybody to have this kind of a study made of his past."—*Raymond Moley, Editor of Today*.

"Think back over the pictures you have seen during the past year and you will remember an unusually high percentage of clean entertainment. One Father Donnelly paid an unusual tribute to Hollywood cooperation in this campaign when he wrote recently in a Catholic magazine that 'Producers have lived up to their promises with admirable fidelity. They have shown a splendid spirit of cooperation with the official leaders of the Legion of Decency.' This is high praise from such a source."—*Denver Rocky Mountain News*.

"The movies are cleaner morally than they have been for a decade, which is to say for half their span of life."—*New Orleans (La.) Item*.

"For the last two years, and a little longer, the trend of the motion picture industry has been in the direction of better films . . . What the producers have accomplished surpasses the fondest expectations of the advocates of more wholesome, more instructible and more entertaining pictures."—*Greensboro (N. C.) Record*.

"Thoughtful people are generally agreed that a change for the better has marked the output of motion pictures in the last twenty months. Nor has this been anything but a blessing to the producers themselves. By improvement in tone, thousands of new clients have been added. There are today a large number of pictures of unexceptionable merit and moral atmosphere."—*Philadelphia (Pa.) The Presbyterian*.

"Human history is a story of actions and reactions, in morals and in other things. We have been going through a period when the light seemed to have gone out of the sky, when art and literature apparently recognized no such thing as decency in the relations between men and women, and when the drab pessimism of the 'young intellectuals' held the stage. From many sources we gather that we have passed the bottom of the dip and that a more normal view of life in the movies, on the stage, and within the covers of books may be expected for the next half century or longer."—*Cincinnati Times-Star*.

## On the Encouraging Rise in Public Taste

"The taste of movie-goers has apparently undergone a radical change, a change of which recent pains to clean up Hollywood are a symptom rather than a cause. Producers guessed, and guessed rightly, that the public had had its fill of sexationalism and was eager to return to the simple life."—*Cincinnati Times Star*.

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"Hollywood is a barometer of public taste. The pendulum has swung back from artificiality towards sincerity. Bad manners, fast habits, extravagant living, promiscuous petting and free love are ceasing to be 'smart'."—*Los Angeles Times*.

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"Perhaps it would be even more logical to congratulate the great mass of movie patrons who have, contrary to some earlier predictions, revealed a real taste for higher quality and cleaner film productions. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to effect any enduring and substantial reform without general support from the persons concerned in that reform."—*Butte (Mont.) Standard*.

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"Within the last year the motion picture producers have done much to stimulate interest in grand opera by presenting films in which well known opera singers have been starred.

"The picture producers tell us they have been going slowly with these opera pictures in the matter of allowing their stars to sing too many arias from the immortal works of the operatic repertoire. We believe the time is ripe when the opera stars should be permitted to sing the operatic music which is their natural forte. In this way the public will arrive more rapidly at an appreciation of the magnificence of opera."—*South Bend (Ind.) News-Times*.

"Too much praise can hardly be accorded the very real achievement in the industry. The motion picture is by far the best public laboratory in which the reactions of the American nation are easily discernible. There is real promise in improved taste and demand for the type of pictures once ignored in favor of sex and slaughter."—*Dallas Morning News*.

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"It will please you to know that the public at last is waking up to the fact that clean movies can be entertaining. The trend in motion pictures is entirely up to the public. If the public will support that sort of picture, the producers naturally are eager to make them."—*Boston Traveler*.

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"The Memphis Better Films Council is pointing with quite pardonable pride to the fact that the public has come around to patronizing motion pictures upon which the council has placed the stamp of approval.

"A year ago it was a rare phenomenon to find an 'approved picture' doing business at the box office. But Motion Picture Herald's compilation of the box office champions for the first six months of 1935 shows 10 of the 13 winners to be pictures approved by the Memphis Council.

"It speaks well, both for the movie industry and for the movie-going public, that the trend of taste has improved."—*Memphis (Tenn.) Commercial Appeal*.

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"The movie going public of the American people, which means most of us, has met the recent challenge in screen reform in no uncertain fashion. We need to select our movies as we do our books and our places of travel, if we would know them at their best, taking it also as something in the line of pleasant duty to discourage the bad by building up the patronage of the good."—*Knoxville (Tenn.) Journal*.



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"What more pleasant method of studying the works of Shakespeare, Dickens, Barrie or Tolstoy, or the grand opera and light opera that are now planned, could be imagined than through a stirring movie featuring the favorite stars? It should be instructive." — *Houston (Texas) Post*.

"The movies are undoubtedly responsible for the current vogue for biographical and autobiographical as well as historical novels."  
—*Philadelphia Record*.

"There is signal proof that the movies have emerged from a period of adolescence into adulthood. The recent establishment in New York of the Modern Art Film Library will immediately increase the prestige of the films in those quarters which consider a serious interest in them a sign either of affectation or intellectual decay. The final recognition of the films by the secondary schools—the outcome of their growing responsibility in the establishing of social values—was inevitable."—*San Francisco Bulletin*.

"The recent avalanche of improved moving pictures has sent hundreds of enthusiasts to the library, seeking the stories they have seen on the screen. If anyone doubts the power of the motion picture as an educational factor he should witness the varied types of borrowers demanding 'The Fountain,' 'Count of Monte Cristo,' 'Resurrection,' 'Great Expectations,' and many others."—*Cleveland (Ohio) Plain Dealer.*

"We look forward to the pictures will be shown in order the better to deal with the habits of historical scenes. And, curriculum, movies not only but also in the cinema can elevate the thoughts of the people and see them."—Jasper

producing of great new dramatic literature industry has been. This achievement is a pleasure to call entertainments still in *Argus*.

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